



FOR MEN ONLY; A HANDBOOK FOR HUSBANDS

By GEORGE S. CHAPPELL

Illustration by WILLIAM HOGARTH JR.



THE family church problem of to-day is a by-product of civilization. "To go, or not to go"; that is the question for the husband, a question which began with the tennis court and flowered with the golf course.

Nowadays most husbands have their religion in their wives' names.

In the olden times this problem did not exist. There was no golf course, and there was always a church to which one went, or spent the following day in the stocks.

There is a picture (by Mr. Boughton, I think) which is a great favorite in guest rooms of the manor period. It shows one of the Pilgrim Fathers conducting his family to divine service. He carries a large family Bible and a long rifle, the purpose of the latter being to shoot the children in case they attempt to run away from the former. The wife is dragged along, a timid accessory to the fact.

How changed all this is now. To-day it is the wife who marshals the flock and sternly commands the lock-step progress toward kirk and Sunday school.

More often than not father is missing from the picture. The army is there, but the general is A. W. O. L. This state of affairs is much bewailed by wives. Husbands are accused of being godless and feebly evade the issue. The minister calls. Husband does a vanishing act. He appears and feels guilty.

The annoying thing is that he isn't guilty at all. He is merely inarticulate. He cannot de-

fend himself. All the weight of tradition, the heavy past, the conservative present, the force of organized opinion are against him. Nine times out of ten he collapses. If he doesn't go to church he feels that he ought to. This thought makes him top his drive on the third hole. The sight of the church spire gives him a fearful slice on the seventh, and the knowledge that his youngest daughter has not yet been baptized is directly responsible for his dropping three balls in the pond on the eighteenth. The poor dumb creature doesn't know that in playing golf instead of going to church he is only obeying his real, inward religious instinct.

If I seem to dwell on golf it is because it, more than other recreations, is the competitor of the church. Most other outdoor recreations may be classified as part-time sports. They can be fitted into a fraction of the day and still leave time for an hour or two of worship. Not so with golf. For a golf addict Sunday means an early start for the first tee, in order to beat out the crowd. There he stays, trailing home only when it is so dark that he can't see the ball. Therefore, I think that golf may be considered as the symbol of all the activities which, of a Sabbath, lure a Husband away from his traditional duties.

Modern religion is individual. Each churchgoer goes for his or her particular reason. There is no mass movement toward the altar as there used to be.

Preparatory to writing this treatise I cross-examined a number of married couples as to the whimsy of their churchgoing. The answers were of splendid variety. A few samples will throw light on the sprightly attitude of present-day thought and clear the way to some general conclusions.

I will quote the ladies first.

Mrs. A.: "Because I believe in it. Of

course, I don't believe that Jonah swallowed the whale—I mean, you know, well, we've always done it. I was brought up that way."

Mrs. B.: "I just love Dr. Haskins. He has the face of an angel and a beautiful voice, and, my dear, such hands! The most spiritual things! Why, last Sunday, during the sermon, I couldn't think of a single thing except those lovely—"

Mrs. C.: "The service doesn't mean so much to me, but the music! And the stained glass! And the smell of clean clothes and sent cushions! Oh, it's too wonderful!"

Mrs. D.: "Miss it? I should say not! Where else would I get a chance to see my friends, and me without a cook for three blessed weeks? It's more than church for me, it's a party."

Mrs. E.: "Do you know it's the most wonderful place in the world to study the new styles. I drew a little sketch on the back leaf of my hymnbook of Mrs. Dibble's new hat—I can make one exactly like it for \$4."

Mrs. F.: "One does it, you know. Of course, it's all rather silly, but, after all, it's the thing. Besides, Freddie is running for supervisor, and there are certain things one must do."

The men's replies were distinguished by their brevity and vagueness. They were almost monosyllabic, as, for instance, "Don't." "Have to." "Go regularly, every Easter." "Get out of it whenever I can," and so on.

Here is a clear rift between Husband and Wife.

Wives, generally speaking, go to church. Husbands do not.

Why? The real answer lies below the surface. It is because woman is less spiritual than man, less religious.

Man, groping, fumbling his way through

the phases of evolution, creates his religious forms as he goes, forms suited to his immediate needs, forms which are discarded as he progresses. Otherwise we would to-day be standing on the top of the Woolworth Building worshipping the sun. I like to think of the sun, the source of warmth, the fiery ball that makes human life possible, as being the first thing that ever was worshipped. I like to imagine Adam rousing his sleeping bride to see the first sunrise, at which he has been peering ecstatically. No doubt he wondered whether he ought to wake her. And then the flush deepened in the east and became altogether too beautiful for him to enjoy alone, so he pulled her ear gently and said: "Oh, Eve, wake up and see what's happening in the sky."

Eve opened one eye, emitted an inaudible murmur and went off to sleep again. Women are that way to this day. Their interest in religion is purely academic. "Dawn, like a pilgrim clad," is all right so long as he goes tiptoe and doesn't wake them!

Man, the husband, creates the worship. His is the imagination, an element which, by and large, is entirely lacking from the feminine mind. Wives busy themselves with definite things and make clever combinations of previous thoughts and imitate men's paintings and poems quite remarkably, but where are the female gods? Where the geniuses who leap beyond the stars?

Talk to the average woman about spinning on the outer ring of Saturn and she will shudder and say: "Please don't. It makes me dizzy!"

When a woman has once adopted a religion she clings to it. It is her rod and her staff; she needs its support, definite, solid, tangible. Husbands are forever changing. They outgrow their staves. They want something else.

To-day it looks like a golf club. The old formulas no longer satisfy them. The Puritan elder has had his day. Husband whistles blithely as he polishes his mashie.

Unconsciously he is seeking a new form of worship. He is happy. I imagine that perhaps the modern husband is simply closing the circle and becoming a sun worshiper again. Is there not something akin to sun worship in the urge that drags so many thousands to links and courts instead of to the inclosing walls of church? And, as a deistic symbol, is not the sun rather splendid? So simple, so single! There always has been, to me, something frolicsome and minstrel-like in the trinitarian conception. It has charm, but not dignity.

And the poor dominies! If they could only agree! But in one fold they are so divided, so unfused, so to speak. Where there are so many varieties none can be particularly convincing.

When I hear the pulpit outcries of some of our close-collared brothers I can but think of the suave remark of an old Chinese gentleman who was speaking of the Christian missionary work in and about Canton: "We adopt your medicine, we enjoy your education, and we greatly admire your ministers for sticking so bravely to such a hopeless task."

A pathetic case which illustrates the general situation is that of my friend Arnold, who has the cure of souls (for the summer) in a little Long Island colony. Now, it is a well known fact that souls are much harder to cure in summer than in winter. Arnold's church, St. David's on the Dunes, is hard by the green of the difficult tenth hole. The worst trap on the golf course is under the eaves of the little gray edifice. Consequently through the open windows on Sunday mornings during service float sounds from without and within, sounds curiously similar in that

the name of the deity is invoked with varying intensity, the exterior calls being, perhaps, the more sincere and intense.

It was after a peculiarly violent external outburst of this sort that Arnold one day strode majestically down the aisle and from the porch addressed the guilty foursome, which was just moving toward the next tee. In ringing tones the young rector spake: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

And a fervent voice replied: "I didn't, doctor; I holed out from the pit."

The remedy would appear, in this symbolic instance, to be the removal either of the church or of the golf course, and golf courses are unwieldy things to move.

In a general way, then, this is the situation. The church, pleading, exhorting, commanding, and influencing chiefly the wives; the golf course, smiling in the sun, silent, alluring, sought furtively or defiantly by husbands, who do not realize that in so doing they are obeying a deeply religious instinct and worshipping the Almighty, not with book and candle or palms and psalters, but with drives and mashie and hook and slice.

In most families this conflicting situation is solved by the arbitrary method of devoting only those Sundays to golf on which golf can be played. Certainly nothing could be fairer than that.

Consequently, "when winter comes," as Mr. Shelley almost said, many husbands come to the externals of religion, and many a papa marches proudly up the aisle, serene in the consciousness that the bunkers are full of snow and the fair green a glare of ice. But spring is not far behind, and when March has melted the ice cap and April has brought out the grass and May has dried the hollow—well, I know husbands pretty well, and—particularly if I were a minister or a wife—I wouldn't trust one of them around the corner.

As I said before, they are so imaginative.

GEORGE—What d'ya mean, a dinner jacket? None of that bunch will wear dinner jackets. It would be putting on side to wear one.

GRACE—Well, I asked her if we should dress, and she said to come as we liked—you know what that means.

GEORGE—Coming as I like means coming in my regular clothes. I'll slip on a clean collar, though. I suppose that would be only decent.

GRACE—George! You can't. You know she meant to dress when she said come as you like. She'd be mortally insulted, and she's been horribly nice to us, really she has.

GEORGE—Well, you know what that means. Bath, shave, hunting all over the place for a dress shirt and not finding it, tying a tie that looks like a rosette and having to untie it ten or twelve times, and—but it's no use. I sent my dress trousers to the tailor's to be pressed and they haven't got back yet.

GRACE—Oh yes they have. I sent for them this afternoon.

GEORGE—I don't see why the darnation bowwows people want to tog out in a lot of silk faced clothes just to get a meal in. I'll bet those people would put on dinner clothes to go out to a lunch wagon for a pair of hot dogs and a cup of coffee.

GRACE—I know, dear, but we can't help that. And we'd better hurry. We'll be late if we don't.

GEORGE—What's the difference if we are

DINNER CLOTHES UNMAKE THE MAN

By JAMES J. MONTAGUE

Illustrations by MERLE JOHNSON

late? As long as we've diked out right those people won't care how late we are. If I was giving a dinner I'd rather people would come in bathing suits and be on time than make them spend an hour or two getting hand-laundered and poured into silly clothes just to be conventional. Where's my shirt?

GRACE—Here it is. I laid it out for you.

GEORGE—This shirt won't do. I told you never to give the laundry another chance at that shirt. Look at it. One of those machines has shaken it like a terrier shakes a rat.

GRACE—Isn't there another one in your chiffonier?

GEORGE—I'll see. (He pokes his head into a large drawer, moving his hands as a rabbit moves his paws when excavating a burrow, and a stream of linen garments sails out on each side of him.)

GRACE—George! For heaven's sake. Take them one at a time. You've got the floor covered with them.

GEORGE (emerging with a shirt in his hand)—By golly, I found one of them—a clean one, too! (He exhibits it proudly.)

GRACE—Well, that is something. Here are the studs.

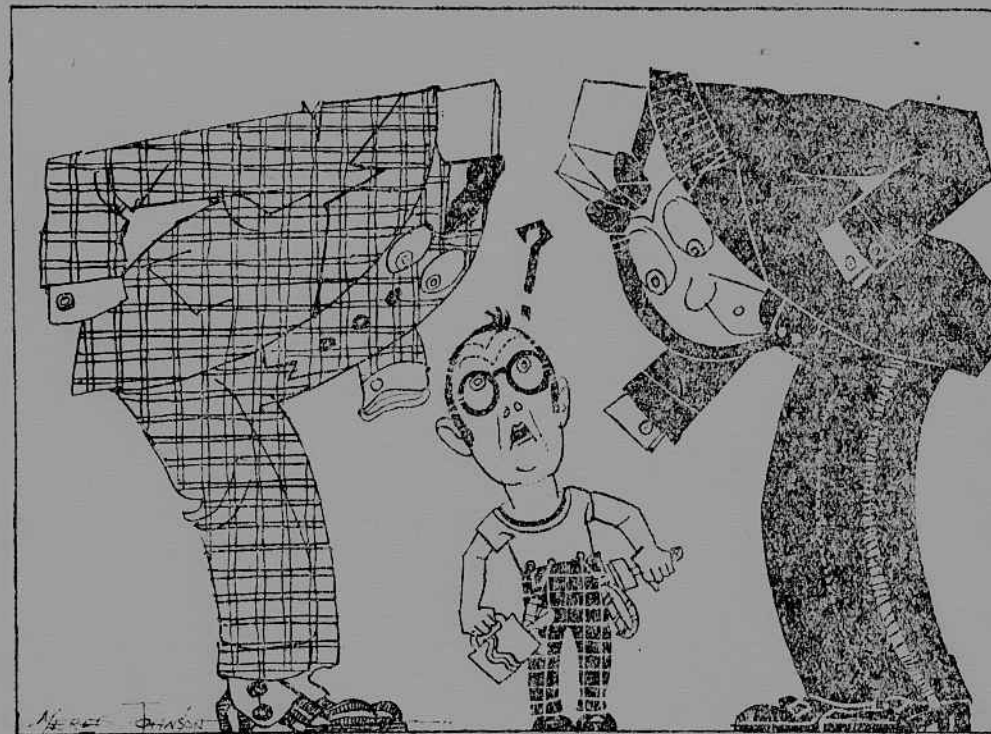
GEORGE—Two of 'em? Where's the other?

GRACE—That was all I could find. I thought two would do.

GEORGE—Two studs—I might as well have one shoe.

GRACE—Can't you use something else for the bottom one? Your waistcoat covers it, you know.

GEORGE—It covers it sometimes and sometimes it slips. Oh, well, I'll have to put in a



To dress, or not to dress; that is the question

laundry basket and take a chance. Tie?

GRACE—Will this one do?

GEORGE—It will not do. Can't you see that it's green with age?

GRACE—What about this one?

GEORGE—Wrong shape. Those people

would rather have me show up in the altogether than with a hick tie like that.

GRACE—Well, here's one that is fine.

GEORGE—Grease spots as big as dimes on 'em. I wore it that time the waiter spilled the gravy over me.

GRACE—Well, that seems to be all of them.

GEORGE—All right, we can't go, that's all.

GRACE—But George, we must go.

GEORGE—Where's my suspenders?

GRACE—Those old ones? I gave them to the Salvation Army. I supposed you always used a belt and—

GEORGE—If I used a belt with these trousers, two inches of the legs would drag along the ground. But I suppose I can sew them to myself some way. Or nail them, maybe. How about my dinner jacket? Did you give that to the Salvation Army?

GRACE—Certainly not.

GEORGE—Well I'm surprised that you didn't. You give all my magazines and my newspapers and all my pet raincoats and my correspondence to 'em.

GRACE—Do hurry, George.

GEORGE—(Lathering his face). I'm hurrying as fast as I can. I wanted to get everything collected. Where's the safety razor blades?

GRACE—The old ones? I had them put in the garbage can. You said you would get a new package.

GEORGE—That settles it! No shave.

GRACE—But didn't you get the new blades?

GEORGE—Grace, you have lived with me long enough to know that I never remember safety blades. Nobody ever does. Never mind, though. I'll go dredge the garbage cans for the old ones.

GRACE (beginning to sniff)—They to-took them away.

GEORGE—All right. I'll shave with an old-fashioned razor. I suppose they won't object to my showing up half scalped and with only one ear, so long as I have the right clothes on. (He begins to strop an old style razor.) What did you do with my sleeve links?

GRACE—I've put them in your shirt.

GEORGE—Which ones?

GRACE—The pearl ones. Was that wrong?

GEORGE—No, O. K. I'll be with you in a minute. (Ten minutes later George walks down stairs, his face a little damaged by the unaccustomed razor, but neatly and correctly attired. At that moment the telephone rings. George answers it.)

GEORGE—Yes, Mrs. Cartwright, this is Mr. Perkins. Yes. Oh, yes indeed. Not at all. Certainly. Oh, no. Yes, I understood it that way. Grace told me. Yes, I know. Just come in business clothes. No. Surely not. I hadn't thought of dressing. I knew you were regular folks and wouldn't want a chap to doll up on a minute's notice. Thank you. We'll be right over. It may take me a minute or two to efface the stains of labor, that's all. Goodbye. See you soon. (He puts down the telephone.) Grace!

GRACE—What is it?

GEORGE—Get a pair of scissors and cut me out of this rig quick. Somebody has shown up there in a business suit and that old harridan is going to make us all come that way.

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